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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0950  
INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS IMMEDIATE  
RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 USUN NEW YORK 002254

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EMBASSY BEIJING FOR KAGAN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/14/2011  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [UNSC](#) [BM](#) [CH](#)  
SUBJECT: CHINESE IN NY THREATEN VETO OF BURMA RESOLUTION

REF: BEIJING 24497

Classified By: Political Minister-Counselor William Brencick for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (C) Summary: Chinese Political Counselor Li Junhua told PolCouns and deputy PolCouns December 14 that if the United States moved forward with its draft resolution on Burma there would be a "political showdown" in the Security Council. Speaking without instructions but based on telecons with his capital, Li reported that upon receiving the U.S. draft the Chinese had engaged with the Burmese in New York, Rangoon, and Beijing. The Burmese had claimed the draft resolution proved there is no benefit for the regime in responding to international concerns and threatened to cut off cooperation with the UN Secretary-General's Good Offices mission if the Security Council adopted a product (i.e., an UNSCR or Presidential Statement), an outcome Li argued would undercut our shared interests. Li stated that China believes the most effective route to effect change in Burma is through its bilateral relationship. He also said that China would urge ASEAN to take a more active role in pressing the regime. Although China had opposed including Burma on the Security Council agenda, Li said China now accepts the fact of regular briefings by U/SYG Gambari which he argued is the appropriate mechanism to demonstrate Council support for the Good Offices mission. Pressed repeatedly, Li maintained that Beijing is implacably opposed to an UNSCR, suggesting that even a discussion of the U.S. draft at an expert level would lead to conflict between the United States and China. Separately, the Japanese have indicated they are firmly opposed to UNSC action in December while they remain a member of the Security Council. End Summary.

Strong Reaction in Beijing  
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2. (C) PolCouns and DeputyPolCouns met December 14 with the PolCouns of the Chinese Mission, Li Junhua, who earlier in the month had asked to engage bilaterally with USUN about the proposed UNSCR on Burma. PolCouns had shared the draft resolution with Li on December 12. Li characterized the reaction in Beijing to the U.S. draft as "very negative" and said it was "stronger than I expected." He said Beijing had no intention of proposing revisions to the text. He observed that if the United States tabled the resolution in the Council and sought a vote there would be a "political showdown." He also argued against tabling the resolution for discussion, suggesting the outcome would only lead to conflict between the United States and China.

China and Burma  
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3. (C) Stating that he was not speaking on instructions although he had spoken by phone with his colleagues in

Beijing, Li reported that upon receiving the draft China had consulted with the Burmese in New York, Rangoon, and Beijing.

(In Rangoon he said the Chinese had access to the MFA and the Prime Minister.) The Burmese reportedly said the draft resolution proved there is no benefit for the regime in responding to international pressure because the draft resolution labels the country a "bad state." The Burmese also reportedly told the Chinese that if the Security Council adopted a product (i.e., an UNSCR or PRST), the regime would cut off all cooperation with the UN SYG's Good Offices mission. Li argued that such action would be counterproductive.

¶4. (C) PolCouns explained to Li that the purpose of the draft was to respond to U/SYG Gambari's request, echoed by ASSK, for the Council to act in support of the Good Offices mission. The text also outlined concerns shared by the international community and the subject of Gambari's dialogue with the regime. Li said that China had engaged with Burma after both of Gambari's trips, urging the regime to be responsive. China will continue such bilateral engagement, its preferred method of engaging the regime. While admittedly the regime had not yet acted, China believes the process of UN engagement is positive and opposes action that would threaten that cooperation. Li also compared the Burmese regime to DPRK, especially in terms of its isolation and resistance to anything considered "outside interference."

¶5. (C) When pressed repeatedly to suggest a means for the Council to endorse the Good Offices mission and to make clear that the international community expected a timely and concrete response to Gambari's requests, Li noted the Council had already issued a press statement in support of Gambari (at his last briefing on November 27). He added that regular

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briefings by Gambari to the Council are the most appropriate means for the Council to follow this issue, noting that acceptance of such briefings is a shift in Chinese policy, as the Chinese had opposed adding Burma to the Council agenda. Finally, he said that China is ready to ask ASEAN to increase pressure on the regime; this regional body is the appropriate forum for pressure, he stated.

Support for Gambari

¶6. (C) PolCouns also tried to argue there was a need for action now in the Council, given the upcoming change in UN senior leadership. Li dismissed this argument, and reported that the Africa Group in the UN had advised the new SYG Ban-ki Moon that Africans supported retaining Gambari in the position of U/SYG for Political Affairs. Li said China also supported Gambari, and noted that Gambari enjoyed the trust of the Burmese regime. This was another reason not to jeopardize the regime's cooperation with the UN.

Japanese Cold Feet

¶7. (C) Separately, in meetings December 13 and 14 with various members of the Japanese delegation, the Japanese informally conveyed the message that they now oppose any action in the Council on Burma in December, their last month as an elected member of the Council.

Next Step

¶8. (C) Noting that both the IO and EAP equivalents of the Chinese MFA opposed the draft Burma resolution, Li recommended that Ambassador Ranz engage the assistant Foreign Minister.

Comment

19. (C) Although he did not use the word "veto," it was clear that the always understated Li intended the phrase "political showdown," which he repeated several times, to be a synonym for a veto.

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